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Intelligence Community Improved and Pulling Together Dr. Albert D. Wheelon of PFIAB Tells AFIO Audience

It was all good news as Dr. Albert D. Wheelon, a senior vice president of the Hughes Aircraft Company, briefed AFIO's Flag Day luncheon from his vantage point as a member of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board.

Dr. Wheelon, who since 1970 has headed the Hughes group responsible for space and communications programs, compared his return to the intelligence arena with the experience of Rip Van Winkle. "Because I haven't been watching the plants grow but, rather, came back when the garden was fully in bloom, perhaps I've been able to get a little clearer impression of the enormous progress that's been made since that day in 1966 when I hung up my gown."

"It's clear to me," he said, "that the other intelligence agencies are rallying behind Bill Casey's leadership." Wheelon noted that the Intelligence Community is characterized by a stability and a collaboration unknown in his time as CIA's deputy director for science and technology. "Bill Casey supports his Community and they support him, and together they support the President and our country."

Since his appointment to PFIAB, he said he has been pleased to see the Intelligence Community working together, with more support and less duplication. "It seems to me," Dr. Wheelon noted, "that the analytical community is closer to an intellectual equilibrium in which people can see opposite sides of the same issue and debate them without passion, but with reason . . . you don't have the polarized sort of hard, entrenched opinions that were so much a part of my time." He has noted also that the problem mix, the requirements placed on the Intelligence Community, is substantially wider than it once was. "Today, we must collect and analyze data on drug trafficking, on terrorism, on the debt crisis of Third World countries, which is pretty important, on technology outflow, and on a succession of arms controls talks that are forever starting and breaking down." Yet another improvement, said the speaker, is "at long last we all seem to have identified the real enemy."



Dr. Albert D. Wheelon

"I think one of the most welcome surprises that I came across is the relationship that the Community enjoys with academia today, and other intellectuals," the speaker said. He cited the many conferences held throughout the year on important research projects and the number of distinguished academics who serve sabbaticals in the intelligence agencies. But, unlike academic relations when Dr. Wheelon was with CIA, "the difference is that usually took place in secret, and the relationship today seems to be out on the top of the table and in clear view, and people seem comfortable with it."

He also noted what he called a renaissance taking place. "In my time, the very sophisticated technical analyses were done too often by contractor people at national laboratories or major corporations. Today I can tell you that those same analyses are performed by career intelligence officers who are extraordinarily well trained and completely conversant with all the technical details that they once deferred to others."

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